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ABSTRACT

This paper traces the ideology (assertions, theories, and aims) of public schooling from Plato through the first Prussian state school system under Bismarck, through Adam Smith and John Stuart Mill. It contends that public schooling contradicts and works to destroy the United States' libertarian traditions of freedom and self-rule. Though not often reported in America's history, responsible critics of the public school ideology have continued to resist it both in this country and in Europe. Critics of public schooling reason as follows: in a republic, citizens have the power to shape society and government so that society's structure will be along the lines that its leaders think best. Leaders must employ the public schools to mold the citizens to retain the leaders' idea of the good society. As a minimum, the schools must condition citizens not to exercise their power against the leaders. Finally, whether the goal of the moment is homogeneity or social betterment, the chief role of public schooling is to condition the individual to serve first the interests of society and the state. The paper concludes that the future of America's liberty requires separation of the school from the state. (Author/JK)

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EDUCATION AND THE POLITICAL COMMUNITY

JOSEPH R. PEDEN

ABSTRACT

America's dominant ideology in public schooling remains virtually unchanged from the early years of our republic.

The ideology can be traced from Plato through the first Prussian state school system under Bismarck, through Adam Smith and John Stuart Mill.

The ideology contradicts and works to destroy this country's libertarian traditions of freedom and self-rule.

Though not well reported in our early history, responsible critics of the public school ideology have continued to resist it both in this country and in Europe.

The advocates of the dominant ideology reason as follows:

In a republic, citizens have the power to shape society and government.

So that society's structure will be along the lines that its leaders think best, they must employ the public schools to mold the citizens so that they exercise their power to retain -- or build -- the leaders' idea of the good society.

As a minimum, so the ideology reasons, the schools must condition citizens not to exercise their power against the leaders.

Whether the goal of the moment is homogeneity or social betterment, according to this ideology, the chief role of public schooling is to condition the individual to serve first the interests of society and the state.

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The last decade has witnessed a remarkable outpouring of extreme criticism of the American public school system. Going beyond the predictable attacks on the rising cost, the declining quality of instruction, and the controversial content of the curriculum, the new critics have begun to question the historic character, the sociopolitical purposes, the very legitimacy of the traditional public or common school system as it has developed in the United States since the early nineteenth century.¹

Considering the almost total monopolization of public financing of education enjoyed by the public schools, and the resulting State control over the schooling of nearly ninety percent of the children of school age, some critics perceive the system as a danger to liberty, as an instrument of social, cultural, and moral homogenization, designed to weaken and

even destroy racial, ethnic religious, and personal cultural diversity. Others see the school system as a powerful instrument of class oppression, serving the interests of corporate capitalism, of a self-serving bureaucratic elite, of an increasingly manipulative, powerful State.

While the practical effectiveness of the public school may be discounted as a means of promoting ruling class values and of social control over the diverse masses, skeptics view the school as so powerful an instrument shaping social structures in society that they see no other option but "deschooling." These critics ask for abolition of the school as a structured institution. In its place they want other less formidable means to communicate knowledge and skill.

Disestablishmentarians seek safety and liberty in the abolition of the present union of School and State through future reliance on the free market to supply the educational needs of the people.²

The distinguished educator Robert Hutchins sums up the general discontent:

Nobody has a kind word for the public school, the institution that only the other day was looked upon as the foundation of our freedom, the guaranty of our future, the cause of our prosperity and power, the bastion of our security, and the

¹See Ivan Illich, Deschooling Society (New York 1970); Joel Spring, Education and the Rise of the Corporate (Boston 1972); Christopher Jenks, Inequality: A Reexamination of the Effect of Family and Schooling in America (New York 1972); William Rickenbacker, ed., The Twelve Year Sentence: Radical Views of Compulsory Education (LaSalle, Ill. 1974); Murray N. Rothbard, For a New Liberty (New York 1973), Chapter 7; E.G. West, Education and the State (London 1970), pp. xlii-liv on vouchers; George LaNoue, Educational Vouchers: Concepts and Controversies (New York 1972).

²Ibid. Rothbard, West and Illich for instance.

source of our enlightenment.³

Hutchins, in organizing a major survey of the public school system under the auspices of the Center for Democratic Institutions tried to find the basic justification for continuing the virtual monopoly exercised by the State over education. He concluded that:

The purpose of the public schools is not accomplished by having them free, universal and compulsory. Schools are public because they are dedicated to the maintenance and improvement of the public thing, the res publica; they are the common schools of the commonwealth, the political community. They may do many things for the young; they may amuse them, comfort them, look after their health, keep them off the streets. But they are not public schools unless they start their pupils toward an understanding of what it means to be a self-governing political community.⁴

³Robert M. Hutchins, "The Schools Must Stay," The Center Magazine (January/February 1973).

⁴Robert M. Hutchins, "The Role of Public Education," Today's Education, vol. 63, no. 7 (November/December 1973), p. 84.

The basic political character of the public school's mission is affirmed by the distinguished and influential Russell Professor of Education at Teachers' College, Columbia, Dr. R. Freeman Butts. Butts is even more explicit than Dr. Hutchins in detailing the full significance of the political character of the public school system:

to achieve a sense of community is the essential purpose of public education. This work cannot be left to the vagueries of individual parents, or small groups of like-minded parents, or particular interest groups, or religious sects, or private enterprisers, or cultural specialties....I believe the chief end of American public education is the promotion of a new civism appropriate to the principles of a just society in the United States and a just world community.... We require the renewal of a civic commitment that seeks to reverse and overcome the trend to segmented and disjunctive 'alternatives' serving narrow or parochial or racist interests.⁵

Hutchins's and Butt's subordination of the individual's right to total freedom in choosing the content and means of his own (or children's)

⁵R. Freeman Butts, "The Public School: An Assault on a Great Idea," The Nation (April 30, 1973).

education seems to mock the libertarian traditions and values of American society. They ignore the culturally pluralistic character of that society. Hutchins's and Butts's theses seem more akin spiritually to the republic of Plato's imagination or to modern totalitarian states than to the individualism and racial, religious, and cultural diversity of American experience. Yet both educators represent an ideological position that can be traced to the earliest days of the American republic, to some of the most important and influential of the founding fathers, principally to Benjamin Franklin, Benjamin Rush, and Thomas Jefferson, all three signers of the Declaration of Independence, fathers of the American Republic and of the American public school system as well.

Although the most cosmopolitan of men, Franklin, Rush, and Jefferson shared the fears and dislike of many of their fellow Americans for the diversity of cultures they found in America. The passion for homogeneity in race, religion, and culture was very strong among American colonists. The history of the colonial period is replete with ethnic and religious conflicts; the multicultural character of the Middle Atlantic colonies was almost an accident of history. New England was particularly hostile to religious dissenters, Scottish or Irish settlers, or anyone who did not conform to the official sense of propriety. The preference for homogeneity in society took on greater significance after the revolution united the disparate colonial societies into

one nation with a common government and citizenship. How was homogeneity to be achieved? How was the political system created by the revolution to be perpetuated? Franklin, Rush, and Jefferson were all to contribute to answering these questions.

Franklin was the first American to envision and propose a voluntary union of the English colonies. As early as 1751 he outlined his scheme in a private letter; it was presented more elaborately in 1755 to the members of the American Philosophical Society, the principal grouping of intellectuals in the American colonies, founded by Franklin himself, and somewhat later including Rush and Jefferson among its active members. In this address Franklin urged that Parliament prohibit any further immigration of non-English people into the American colonies. He was especially hostile to the German settlers in Pennsylvania who he claimed threatened to Germanize the entire colony.⁶

This was more than a mere fit of pique; Franklin was also a proto-Anglo-Saxon racist. He lumped together with blacks and Indians, the "tawny" or "swarthy" peoples of Europe, the Spaniards, Italians, French, Russians, Swedes, and all the Germans except the Saxons (who were fair in complexion). He saw them as undesirable candidates for immigration to the American colonies. As for blacks, Franklin bought and sold slaves, but never felt comfortable with them as servants.

⁶Carl Van Doren, Benjamin Franklin, (New York 1961), p. 218.

Though he eventually presided over one of the earliest anti-slavery societies in Philadelphia, he urged that freed slaves be subject to a tutelage normally exercised only over children.

Franklin's great activity in establishing English-language secondary schools in Pennsylvania was not unrelated to his fears about the flourishing cultural diversity of the people of Philadelphia.⁷

Benjamin Rush was a protégé of Franklin, a physician, chemist, politician, and educational reformer. Though less hostile toward the Pennsylvania Germans than Franklin, he also saw the necessity of winning them away from their native German language and customs. In 1786 he urged that the Pennsylvania legislature create a state-wide system of publicly supported free schools in each township, four "colleges" in different regions of the state, and a university at Philadelphia. The purpose of this system was essentially political. Rush believed "freedom can exist only in a society of knowledge." "Without schooling mankind is incapable of knowing their rights, and where learning is confined to a few people, liberty can be neither equal nor universal." But the schools would, if created by the state legislature, "by producing one general and uniform system of education... render the mass of the people more homogeneous and thereby

fit them more easily for uniform and peaceable government."⁸

Rush's proposals were not accepted. They were similar in scope and purpose to Thomas Jefferson's famous plan presented to the Virginia legislature in 1779, which met the same fate. Jefferson's concern for the possible effect of large-scale immigration of non-English peoples to America was linked to his equation of political unity with cultural homogeneity. In his Notes on Virginia, written in the midst of the war for independence, he expounded the view that:

It is for the happiness of those united in society to harmonize, as much as possible, in matters which of necessity they must transact together. Civil government being the sole object of forming societies, its administration must be conducted by common consent. Every species of government has its specific principles. Ours are perhaps more peculiar than those of any other in the universe.

⁸See Benjamin Rush, "Plan for the Establishment of Public Schools and the Diffusion of Knowledge in Pennsylvania, Philadelphia 1786," in Wilson Smith, ed., Theories of Education in Early America 1655-1819 (Indianapolis 1973), pp. 240-56. Also, Lyman Butterfield, "Benjamin Rush as a Promoter of Useful Knowledge," Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society 92 (1948), pp. 26-36.

⁷Mathew T. Mellon, ed., Early American Views on Negro Slavery (Boston 1934) pp. 5-28.

It is the composition of the freest principles of the English constitution, with others derived from natural right and natural reason. To these nothing can be more opposed than the maxims of absolute monarchies. Yet from such are we to expect the greatest number of emigrants. They will bring with them the principles of government they leave, imbibed in their early youth; or if able to throw them off, it will be in exchange for an unbounded licentiousness, passing as usual from one extreme to another. It would be a miracle were they to stop precisely at the point of temperate liberty. These principles, with their language, they will transmit to their children. In proportion to their numbers, they will share with us the legislation. They will infuse into it their spirit, warp and bias its direction, and render it a heterogeneous, incoherent, distracted mass.... May not our government be more homogeneous more peaceful, more durable [without such emigrants]?⁹

Jefferson's analysis and fears were frequently quoted and echoed again and again

⁹Thomas Jefferson, Notes on the State of Virginia (New York 1864), p. 83.

throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries whenever the question of immigration, naturalization, or public schooling became a subject of debate. Ethnic, religious, or cultural pluralism was almost everywhere viewed by the native Americans of Anglo-Saxon heritage as an undesirable, dangerous, and difficult problem.¹⁰ Universal public education was one of the most potent weapons in the struggle to reestablish homogeneity and social order. Jefferson's solution for the black population was based on his conclusion that they were incapable of assimilation into the homogeneous white American society. He urged their emancipation and removal from American territory.¹¹ But for other ethnic dissidents, the schools were to become the means of acculturation to the norms of the dominant culture of America.

The assumption that a free society could not endure without an educated citizenry was to become a commonplace of American political and

¹⁰See, for example, Dr. Samuel Busey, Immigration: Its Evils and Consequences (New York 1856), pp. 7-8; also, Howard Mumford Jones, O Strange New World (New York 1952), pp. 322-27.

¹¹See Mellon, op. cit., pp. 85-123; Jefferson, op. cit., pp. 132-34, 137-38; Merrill Peterson, Thomas Jefferson and the New Nation: A Biography (New York 1970), pp. 152 ff.

educational discussions.¹² But molding the children of foreigners was not unique to the thought of the founding fathers. The writings of the seventeenth century Puritans and Levelers, the Commonwealth men, are full of such notions. Free primary education was demanded by the Levelers. James Harrington in his widely read utopian tract The Commonwealth of Oceana (1650) urged free schooling for youths between ages nine and fifteen under the supervision of the magistrates. Parents could not be trusted to ensure the future health of the State.

John Molesworth, an Irish admirer of John Locke, insisted that learning was a great "antidote against the plague of tyranny" and linked good government to the level of learning of the people. Molesworth's views circulated widely in the American colonies, and Jefferson read his work shortly before introducing his own scheme for public education to the Virginia legislature.

In 1765 Dr. John Brown advocated deliberate indoctrination by the government through schooling to assure patriotic virtue in the manner of the Spartans.¹³

¹²Russell B. Nye, The Cultural Life of the New Nation 1776-1830, (New York 1960), pp. 153-56.

¹³Lawrence Cremin, American Education: The Colonial Experience 1607-1783 (New York 1970), pp. 419-28. On Dr. Brown see Burton Pollin, Education and Enlightenment in the Works of William Godwin (New York 1962), p. 136.

The educational system of Sparta was widely known among all well-educated persons in the eighteenth century. The classical school curriculum invariably included the reading of Plutarch, Xenophon, Thucydides, and large chunks of Plato, especially his political writings, the Republic and less frequently The Laws. Similar conditions prevailed among American intellectuals. This meant that most were familiar with the Spartan educational system devised by the great lawgiver Lycurgus, and with Plato's extensive scheme for the education of the citizens of his utopian Republic, which seemed to be drawn in spirit from the model of Sparta.¹⁴

Linking republican government to the need for a widely diffused republican education, many American intellectuals drew upon the Spartan-Platonic model to argue for a national system of education for the United States. Benjamin Rush set the pattern:

Next to the duty which young men owe to their Creator, I wish to see a SUPREME REGARD TO THEIR COUNTRY inculcated upon them....Our Country includes family, friends, and property, and should be preferred to them all. Let our pupil be taught that he

¹⁴See Elizabeth Rawson, The Spartan Tradition in European Thought (Oxford 1969). This is a fascinating and original study of the influence of Iacanism and its impact on educational thinking, with special attention to the French philosophies.

does not belong to himself, but that he is public property. Let him be taught, at the same time, that he must forsake and even forget them, when the welfare of his country requires it. He must watch for the State as if its liberties depended upon his vigilance alone.... He must be taught how to amass wealth, but it must be only to increase his power of contributing to the wants and demands of the State.... I am satisfied that the most useful citizens have been those youth who have never known or felt their own wills till they were one and twenty years of age, and I have often thought that society owes a great deal of its order & happiness to the deficiencies of parental government being supplied by those habits of obedience and subordination which are contracted at schools.¹⁵

¹⁵In an appendix Rawson deals with laconism in the United States and is not familiar with its use in the writings of American educational theorists. Its role in the history of American education apparently remains to be documented. Here we can see its influence in the writings of Rush and subsequently, Samuel Harrison Smith (see below, note 16). For Rush, see Wilson Smith, op. cit., pp. 247-48.

Similar thoughts emerged in the prize-winning essay on the best system of education "adopted to the genius of the United States." It was written in 1797 for the American Philosophical Society by Samuel Harrison Smith, who boldly argued that "society must establish the right to educate and acknowledge the duty of having to educate all children." He noted the failure of most states to carry out this duty, even when they were so obligated by their own constitutions. As for the rights of parents over their children's education, Smith contended that:

Error is never more dangerous than in the mouth of a parent... prejudices are as hereditary as titles; [education] is so momentarily important [that it] must not be left to the negligence of individual.... By education remote from parental influences, the errors and vices of the parents may cease to be entailed upon the child.... The most solemn attention must be paid to avoid instilling into the young mind any ideas or sentiments whose truth is not unquestionably established by the undisputed suffrage of the enlightened and virtuous part of mankind.¹⁶

¹⁶Samuel Harrison Smith, Remarks on Education (Philadelphia 1798), pp. 39 and 66.

Such enlightened individuals were to be esconced in a national board of education. Composed of fourteen members, the board was to be elected with life tenure by the faculty of the national university. They were to create and administer a system of public schools, choosing the teachers, curriculum, and all textbooks. Smith was clearly influenced not only by the Spartan-Platonic model, but also by the debates that were then taking place on the same subject in the French National Assembly.¹⁷

It was left for Rush to employ a peculiarly mechanistic metaphor as he summarized the view of many of his contemporaries, and subsequent American educators as well. The system of public free schools was necessary, he said, "to convert men into republican machines. This must be done if we expect them to perform their parts properly in the great machine of the government of the State." The wills of the people must be "fitted to each other by means of education before they can be made to produce regularity and unison in government."¹⁸

¹⁷Ibid., pp. 88 ff. and p. 39.

¹⁸Wilson Smith, op. cit., pp. 251-52. Rush also pleaded with the Pennsylvania legislature to halt further immigration of "the annual refuse of the jails of England and Ireland and our sister states." He wished to preserve the Pennsylvanians' "morals, manners, and government from infection of European vices." p. 256.

As we have seen, even before the end of the eighteenth century, certain ideas had been established among the founding fathers, Franklin, Rush, and Jefferson, which would form the core of the public-school ideology in our own time.

America was a republic and needed a system of republican education. The prevailing ideology demanded that a national political community be founded on cultural homogeneity. Its proponents wanted to exclude ethnic and cultural minorities (by extradition of blacks and Indians, or cutting off the flow of undesirable immigrants) and assimilate those already settled through acculturation by means of public schooling.

Considering the prestige and political skills of Rush, Franklin, and Jefferson, it is somewhat surprising their ideas on public education did not bear fruit until the 1830s. The prerevolutionary school system, if one can use that word properly to describe the highly individual character of the educational enterprises in the various states, generally prevailed for nearly fifty years after the success of the American Revolution. Education was largely privately financed. State grants were made occasionally in New York. And the towns in New England were supposed to maintain schools out of public taxes, although they frequently neglected to do so. No National university was ever funded by Congress, despite requests from every president until the election of Jackson.¹⁹

¹⁹Merle Curti, The Social Ideas of American Educators (continued)

Yet suddenly in the 1830s we see a rapid change in the situation, coinciding with an abrupt upswing in the number of immigrants arriving from Europe, especially from Germany and Ireland. Between 1790 and 1810 the number of immigrants is estimated to have averaged less than 5,000 annually; it did not exceed 20,000 until 1828 but jumped to more than 60,000 in 1832. Between 1836 and 1837 the number of immigrants rose to 76-80,000; in 1842 it reached the all-time record of 104,565--and this was before the great exodus from Ireland in the years of the potato famine. Eighty percent of the immigrants were beyond school age; thus, they could be naturalized within five years of their arrival without being subject to any literacy or educational requirements. Many native Americans became very alarmed at the political and social effects of this foreign invasion.²⁰

In 1835 Lyman Beecher expressed the general hysteria that overcame so many Americans. He feared the tremendous influx of aliens,

¹⁹(continued) (Paterson, N.J. 1963), pp. 24-28; Joseph MacCadden, Education in Pennsylvania 1801-1835 (Philadelphia 1937), pp. 1-112; Stanley K. Schultz, The Culture Factory: Boston Public Schools 1789-1860 (New York 1973), pp. 69-92.

²⁰Friedrich Kapp, Immigration and the Commission of Emigration (New York 1870), pp. 12-14; Marcus Hansen, The Atlantic Migration 1607-1860 (Cambridge, Ma. 1940), pp. 120 ff.

especially to the Western states, "the greater part unacquainted with our institutions, unaccustomed to self-government, inaccessible to education, and easily accessible to prepossessive and inveterate credulity and intrigue." In particular he feared the influence of the Catholic clergy on the masses. "While the Protestant clergy were congenial to liberty, the Catholic system was adverse to it." Beecher's solution? "The integrity of the Union demands special exertions to produce in the nation a more homogeneous character and bind us together by firmer bonds. A remedy must be found for the defect of our national laws." He urged the establishment of "pious, intelligent, and enterprising ministers" throughout the nation who would establish schools, academies and colleges and "habits and institutions of homogeneous influence."²¹

Beecher and many who thought as he did were signaling the opening of a new phase in American intellectual and social history. The task of saving America's cultural and moral values, and her political system, was to be accomplished by education of the poor, the foreigners, the ignorant, and the vicious through the establishment of universal, free public schooling. The principal manipulators of the new instrument for acculturation were to be those true to American morality and culture--the sons

²¹Quoted in Richard Lyle Power, "A Crusade to Extend Yankee Culture," New England Quarterly, 13 (1940), pp. 638-53.

of New England.²² The ideas of Jefferson, Franklin, and Rush were advocated with a new sense of urgency.

Professor E. D. Mansfield, a specialist in constitutional law, warned the College of Teachers in Cincinnati in 1835: So long as immigrants remain "a distinct social race, their children will grow up to maturity, come to the polls, with the same notions, prejudices, and peculiar views their fathers entertained. Let us then take their children and educate them in the same schools with our own, and thus amalgamate them with our community." Further, Mansfield declared that it was necessary for "the national security, strength, and peace" that the foreigners who settled in America should cease to be Europeans and become Americans; and that as the whole foundation of our society is English, in language, manners, literature, and institutions, it is necessary that "they become substantially Anglo-Americans

²²Ibid. See also Joseph MacCadden, "The New England Founders of Pennsylvania's School System," Education 56 (1936), pp. 375-78; Timothy Smith, "Protestant Schooling and American Nationality 1800-1850," Journal of American History 53 (1967), pp. 679-95; Caleb Cushing, "Introductory Lecture," Proceedings of the American Institute for Education 1834 (Boston 1836), pp. 1-27 and R. Park, "On Religious Education," Proc. of the Amer. Inst. for Educ. 1835 (Boston 1836), pp. 99-110.

....We must become one nation."²³

Another speaker addressing the same audience as Mansfield reiterated the now familiar litany, though with a metaphor strikingly suggestive of that of the "melting pot":

[our] community is not a compound but an unconsolidated mass; and to acquire uniformity, it must be subjected to the crucible and the schoolmaster as the chemist who can burn out find gold from crude and discordant materials. It is only, Sir, on the children and youth of our immigrant population that we can act with effect. The feelings, modes of thinking and customs of the parents are so fixed that they can at most be slightly modified. And if their vernacular tongue is different from our own, they will prefer to use it still. As native Americans, it is our duty to prevent the entailment of these upon our children and the hereditary establishment among us of a distinct race of foreigners.²⁴

As a parting shot he reminded his audience that "Pennsylvania by not attending in due

²³Quoted in "Report to the College of Teachers 1835" in Allen O. Hansen, Early Educational Leadership in the Ohio Valley (Bloomington 1923), pp. 21-24.

²⁴Ibid., p. 24.

time, is compelled to cherish in her bosom an exotic population"--clearly a reference to the Palatine Germans who were the object of Franklin's and Rush's hostility and concern.

When you consider the close relationship between the establishment of the public school system and the desire to promote and propagate a particular conception of the political community based on cultural homogeneity, the viewpoint of Hutchins and Butts can be seen to be wholly consistent with the ideological conceptions of the founders of the American republic and of its public school system.

What led Jefferson, Rush, and other American intellectuals to advocate a national system of education? One cannot discount the influence of that proud native of Calvinist Geneva, Jean Jacques Rousseau, whose philosophy and educational writings were well known and in part shared by many American intellectuals, including Jefferson, Franklin, and Rush.²⁵

Rousseau first discussed his ideas on national education

in his article on "Political Economy" in the Encyclopedia, V, published in 1755. There he argued:

If the reason of each individual is not allowed to be the sole judge of his duties, still less should the education of children be left to the ignorance and prejudices of their fathers.... Public education according to the regulations prescribed by the government, and under the magistrates appointed by the supreme authority, is therefore one of the fundamental requirements of popular government. If children are educated together on a footing of equality, if they are imbued with the laws of the State and the maxims of the general will, and taught to respect them above all else, if they are surrounded by examples and by objects that unceasingly remind them of the tender mother that fosters them, of the love she bears them, of the inestimable benefits they receive from her, it cannot be doubted that they will learn in this way to cherish each other as brothers and wish only what the community wishes, and that one day they will become the defenders and the fathers of the country of which they

²⁵James B. Conant, Thomas Jefferson and the Development of American Public Education (Berkeley 1962), pp. 17-19. Roy Honeywell, The Educational Work of Thomas Jefferson (Cambridge, Ma. 1931), pp. 160-61. The influence of the French liberals Destutt de Tracy and Dupont de Nemours and of Dr. Joseph Priestly on Jefferson's educational thought is discussed on pp. 160-73. Paul Merrill Spurlin, Rousseau in America 1760-1809 (1969), Chapters 3, 6, and 7.

have so long been the children.²⁶

This passage contains the essential themes used by the American defenders of universal public schooling, and it almost certainly was known to Jefferson before 1779. The essay was first published in English in the United States in 1797, but was probably already known to those who had access to the Encyclopedia.²⁷ Rousseau also outlined a detailed defense of a State-directed educational system in chapter five of his Considerations on the Government of Poland, prepared in 1772 for a Polish aristocrat then involved in the reformation of the Polish constitution. Building on his view expressed in the Encyclopedia that "education is certainly the most important business of the State," Rousseau argued:

It is national institutions that form the genius, the character, the tastes, and the morals of a people and make it different from every other people....It is education that must give the soul of the people a national form, and so shape their opinions and their tastes

²⁶Quoted from William Boyd, ed., The Minor Writings of Jean Jacques Rousseau (New York 1962), pp. 39-43. In this selection, Rousseau specifically mentions the Spartans as one of the ancient peoples with a national system of education.

²⁷Ibid., p. 84.

that they become patriots as much by inclination and passion as by necessity Every true patriot sucks in the love of country with his mother's milk. This love is his whole existence. He thinks of nothing but his country. He lives only for his country. Take him by himself, and he counts for nothing. If his country ceases to exist, so also does he. National education is the privilege of free men.²⁸

This work was published posthumously in France in 1782 and was cited by John Adams in 1787, indicating it, too, had some circulation among Americans.²⁹

In the aftermath of the French Revolution, controversy centered on whether or not to establish a national school system. Here again the debate would have been watched closely by American intellectuals. Jefferson and Rush were both in continuous contact with such French educationists as Dupont de Nemours and Destutt de Tracy.

So was Thomas Paine, who also advocated state-supported schools in The Rights of Man (1792).³⁰ Paine's plan

²⁸Ibid., pp. 95-97.

²⁹Spurlin, op. cit., p. 87.

³⁰Honeywell, op. cit., pp. 163-67. On Paine, see Moncure D. Conway, ed., The Writings of Thomas Paine (New York 1906), vol. 2, pp. 485-86 and 490.

advocated that government remit taxes (up to a certain amount and related to need) on condition that parents enroll their children in a school certified by a church official to learn basic skills for a six-year term. He argued that "A nation under a well-regulated government should permit none to remain uninstructed. It is monarchical and aristocratic government only that requires ignorance for its support."

Plans to establish some kind of national school system were proposed by Mirabeau, Tallyrand, Condorcet, and many others. Finally in 1794 a French law designed by Joseph Lakanal established the principle of universal elementary schooling, but gave the initiative to the individual communes to establish them.³¹

The national role of schooling recognized and espoused by Rousseau, the Physiocrats, Encyclopedists, and other philosophers became axiomatic under the successive regimes of Napoleon. The creator of a new monarchical State, he reacted strongly against private education, which still persisted in postrevolutionary France. The official State system authorized in the law of 1794 had never really materialized to the extent demanded by its supporters.

³¹R. Freeman Butts, A Cultural History of Western Education: Its Social and Intellectual Foundations (New York 1953), pp. 277-78. A discussion of the influence of Spartan education on the debates in the French Assembly during the 1790s can be found in Rawson, op. cit., pp. 278-84.

Napoleon objected to a situation in which "everyone (could) now set up a shop for education as he would one for broadcloth." He felt called upon "to organize a system of education for the new generation, such that both political and moral opinions may be duly regulated thereby." His philosophy was that

Of all political questions, this [education] is perhaps of the highest importance. There will be no fixed political State if there is no teaching corps with fixed principles. As long as one will not learn from childhood on if one must be a republican or a monarchist, a Catholic or an atheist, the State will not form a nation My principal aim in the establishment of a teaching body is to have a means for directing political and moral opinions.³²

The task of opposing State control of education was generally left to the churches and to the classical liberal economists. The churches sought to protect their own religious use of the school for indoctrination of youths. Once the State was willing to protect their interests, the churches gradually came to accept some governmental subsidy and control. If the State did not accept their

³²Quoted in W. H. Kilpatrick, ed., Sourcebook of Philosophy of Education (New York 1931), pp. 8-9. Also, Butts, op. cit. pp. 353-54.

conditions, they opposed its policy.³³

The attitude of the classical economists has been described by E. G. West as falling into two distinct patterns: the negative utilitarian position, which was based on the alleged ability of education to reduce the social cost of crime and disorder, and the positive utilitarian position, which viewed education as a means of elevating the rational, moral, and physical faculties of the unenlightened classes.

The founder of the classical school, Adam Smith, believed it was permissible for the State to establish public schools for those unable to afford private education. He felt the State could even impose some minimum standard of schooling for all children. But he urged that the schoolmaster be paid a very small salary by the "parish," the local unit of public administration in the Scottish schools. Thus, the schoolmaster would need to depend on fees paid by the parents of all but the absolutely indigent. Smith believed this would be an incentive for the teacher to do a good job and would encourage him to seek more

students. He was extremely critical of the existing endowed schools and universities, whose professors were independent of market forces for their income. The professors at these institutions were frequently incompetent, negligent, and often absent from their posts. Smith suggested that access to the electoral franchise or entrance to any trade, be contingent on passing an examination testing basic knowledge.³⁴

Smith justified government-subsidized schooling for the poor as being in the public interest, as making the people less liable to "the delusions of enthusiasm and supposition, which among ignorant nations frequently occasion the most dreadful disorders."³⁵

Smith would have agreed with his followers who saw schooling of the lower classes as a form of "crime" prevention or social control. Yet he clearly preferred education to be supplied principally through the forces of the market, seeing it necessary to promote competence, efficiency, and innovation.

One of the most influential disciples of Adam Smith in the next generation was Jean

³³Classic examples are to be found in the attitudes of the Catholic and Anglican Churches in Ireland as described by Donald Akenson, The Irish Education Experiment: The National System of Education in the 19th Century (London 1970); or see the Catholic-Protestant conflict in New York City in Diana Ravitch, The Great School Wars: New York City 1805-1973 (New York 1974).

³⁴E. G. West, Education and the State: A Study in Political Economy, (London 1970) 2nd ed. pp. 111-25. Also, on the Scottish schools, T. C. Smout, A History of the Scottish People 1560-1830 (London 1972), Chapter 18, pp. 421-50.

³⁵Ibid. Also, Adam Smith, Wealth of Nations (New York 1937), pp. 733-34 and 737-38.

Baptiste Say. His Treatise on Political Economy, published in Paris in 1803 and in Boston in 1821, was to become the principal textbook on the subject in both countries.³⁶ To Say, every increase in scientific knowledge opened the way to an increase in human happiness. Yet the scientific management of educational or research institutions required great skill to prevent them from becoming an impediment rather than a stimulant to scientific progress.

He noted that all the great discoveries in France before 1789 had taken place outside the universities. These institutions resorted to forcing taxpayers to maintain them and monopolized professional careers via certification. He also criticized the university as engendering unfairness due to their institutional esprit de corps, which generated faction and prejudice. In the 1824 American edition of his work, Say remarked in a footnote that:

[Under Napoleon the university in France had become] a most expensive and vexatious contrivance for depraving the intellectual faculties of the rising generation by substituting in the place of a just and correct notion of things, opinions calculated to perpetuate the

political slavery of their country.³⁷

Like Smith, Say saw society benefiting from educating the laboring class and subsidizing the indigent. He advocated a minimum education... reading, writing, counting... but opposed instruction in moral philosophy. However, he feared that public subsidy for higher salaries of government teachers would hurt the private schools. To the State's own detriment, talent would leave the private sector to seek the higher salaries and would check private schooling. He also suggested the State had less interest in hiring men of the highest integrity than did the parent seeking privately financed teachers.³⁸

Thus, the two most influential classical economists, Smith and Say, espoused what West calls the "positive utilitarian" attitude on the question of education. While they preferred the maximum utilization of free-market devices in the field of education, their belief in the social utility of a minimum of education for the poor, laboring class led them to endorse some form of State intervention. Their views were consistent with those of the vast majority of the eighteenth century liberals. Only one significant figure of this period would take a strong principled position in absolute terms against any State intervention or control of education--William Godwin.

William Godwin, a pious, Dissenting minister, was himself ordained in 1778 and

³⁶Jean Baptiste Say, Treatise on Political Economy, 2nd American ed. (Boston 1824), pp. 176-83.

³⁷Ibid., p. 177.

³⁸Ibid., p. 182.

gradually came under the influence of the Enlightened thinkers of the late eighteenth century. He espoused political liberalism and left the ministry. Godwin became an outstanding political commentator, a friend of Paine and the English Jacobins, and the first philosophic anarchist of modern times. He had a lifelong interest in education and was a successful publisher of children's literature as well as novels for adults. His most significant political work, Enquiry Concerning Political Justice, was published in 1793. Its immediate success made him one of the chief spokesmen for advanced liberalism in England. In this work Godwin first vigorously opposed any form of State intervention in education.³⁹

Godwin considered ignorance the principal prop of monarch and aristocracy. He saw education as an effective, universal solvent of tyranny. He had absolute confidence that man would in time reach a stage of development in which he could live in society with his fellowmen without the aid of rulers. Freedom of speech and learning were the essential conditions for such human progress.

Godwin believed man could not achieve this better

³⁹Biographical details in Elton E. Smith and Esther G. Smith, William Godwin (New York 1965); for Godwin's thoughts on education see An Enquiry Concerning Political Justice and its Influence on Morals and Happiness (London 1798), Facsimile ed. by F. E. L. Priestly, ed. (Toronto 1946).

society if the State or its Anglican church agents controlled the formation of public opinion. While recognizing the State's useful role in checking present excesses, he felt it should not, indeed could not, inspire human virtues. Rather, its intervention in the formation of public opinion or the education of men was certain to give permanence and substance to errors. "It is the characteristic of all establishments which have existed for any length of time that they are strenuously in opposition to all innovation and change."⁴⁰

To the objection that the State must educate citizens in order that they not break the laws through ignorance, he rather neatly replied by arguing that just laws were self-evident. If they weren't just, he said they weren't law. Quoting Montesquieu, Godwin argued that in a free State every man was his own legislator, and that any education directed to teaching conformity to law would "destroy in our understanding the discernment of justice." Moreover, Godwin asked, where "must the preceptor himself have been educated who shall elevate his pupil above all the errors of mankind? We must look for the moral improvement of mankind not in the multiplying of regulations, but in their repeal."

To Godwin the fundamental error of those liberals who supported some scheme of national education was their

⁴⁰Godwin, op. cit., pp.235-39. See also Burton Pollin, Education and Enlightenment in the Works of William Godwin (New York 1962), Chapter 3.

assumption that "unpatronized truth is inadequate to the purpose of enlightening mankind." Godwin argued that, even in countries where liberty prevailed, errors would exist; and a national system of public schools "has the most direct tendency to perpetuate those errors and to form all minds upon one model."

At almost the same time that Godwin was preparing his arguments, a young Prussian nobleman, William von Humboldt, was writing a treatise on the limits of the legitimate power of the State. Humboldt's treatise was republished in a posthumous edition that came to John Stuart Mill's notice just as he was preparing his own great work, On Liberty, in 1852. Humboldt was then widely known for his contributions as the first minister of education of Prussia under the liberal Stein administration in 1807-1808. Under his direction the State founded the University of Berlin and a system of State elementary schools. Prussian subjects were given the right to seek education at foreign universities.⁴¹

Humboldt's role in establishing the Prussian public school system, the very model so admired by many American educators of the middle and late nineteenth century, is

⁴¹Herman Klencke, Alexander and William von Humboldt: Two Biographies, trans. by Juliette Bauer (London 1852), pp. 347 ff. Also, William von Humboldt, The Limits of State Action, by J. W. Barrow, ed. (Cambridge, England 1969), see introduction for biographical details.

quite ironic considering his early views on State controller of education. In his essay on The Limits of State Action he explained that the laws of Lycurgus on education reflected a special situation. Long-existing customs were decaying and needed law to sustain them. He found the Spartan educational system only for the most uncultivated nations, a point raised also by Adam Ferguson in his Essay on the History of Civil Society (1766). To Humboldt, as nations matured in culture and refinement and reached higher levels of civilization, only the faintest shadows of earlier primitive institutions normally remained. As society sought ever greater levels of civilization, men discovered they could not ascend "except through the development of individuals, and hence all institutions which act in any way to obstruct or thwart this development, and press men together into uniform masses, are far more harmful than in earlier ages of the world." This was to be a crucial principle for those who opposed State intervention and control of education; the more complex the society, the greater the degree of freedom necessary to assure progress and efficient functioning.⁴²

From this Humboldt questioned national education that was "organized or enforced by the State." In a passage that Mill was to quote in On Liberty, Humboldt summarized his position:

The grand leading principle towards which every argument

⁴²Humboldt, op. cit., pp. 50-51.

hitherto unfolded in these pages directly converges is the absolute and essential importance of human development in its richest diversity. But national education, since it at least presupposes the selection and appointment of some particular instructor must always promote a definite form of development, however careful to avoid such an error. ...I need only add that every restriction becomes more directly fatal when it operates on our moral nature, that if there is one thing more than another which absolutely requires free activity on the part of the individual, it is precisely education whose object is to develop the individual.⁴³

Humboldt found national education detrimental to the nation because it encouraged stability and sterility. It diminished energizing and creative conflict through which human development is effected, and individuals and society perfected. Humboldt, like Ivan Illich, believed that "whatever has unity of organization invariably produces a corresponding uniformity of results, and thus even when passed on such principles (the duty to encourage the spontaneous development of men's faculties) the utility of national

education is still inconceivable."⁴⁴

Humboldt also questioned, in terms much like those of modern sociologists like Jencks, the efficacy of formal schooling in shaping the course of man's actions. He held that "circumstances," environmental conditions that surround a man throughout his life, are far more important, and hence "if all these do not harmonize with (the school's) influences, education alone cannot achieve its objects." In light of the continual emphasis on the need for education to mold character, Humboldt's views are quite striking:

If national education is to impose some definite form on human nature, one can be perfectly sure that it actually does nothing towards preventing transgressions of the law or establishing and maintaining of security. For virtue and vice do not depend on any particular kind of person, nor are they necessarily connected with any particular aspect of character; much more depends on the harmony or discordance of all the different features of a man's character, on the proportion that exists between his energies and the sum of his inclinations, etc. Every distinct development of character is capable of its particular excess,

⁴³ Ibid., p. 51.

⁴⁴ Ibid., pp. 52-53.

and to this it constantly tends to degenerate. If then an entire nation has committed itself to some particular kind of development, it comes in time to lose all power of resisting prevailing bias to this one peculiarity, and along with it all power of regaining its equilibrium.⁴⁵

That the first minister of education of Prussia held such prescient views is grimly ironic! Humboldt's subsequent career as a statesman compelled him to compromise his earlier libertarian views. Although he was extremely anxious about questions of academic freedom and diversity of opinions among the professors at the University of Berlin, he came to learn with some bitterness that his original hostility to the State's role in education was well founded. He ended his public career by resigning in protest at Prussia's implementation of the Carlsbad Decrees in 1819, which placed all German universities and schools under strict police control, dissolved the youth clubs that were centers of liberal discussion, and instituted strict censorship of books, periodicals, and the press. The ministry of justice had supervised Prussian educational institutions until Humboldt's appointment as minister of education. For all practical purposes the system continued to be an arm of the police power of the State throughout its subsequent history.

⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 53.

In England, James Mill and his son John Stuart were among the most important philosophers of education in the early and mid-nineteenth century. Discussion of State involvement in education continued during their lifetimes. Yet no really national State-controlled system of education was established for England and Wales until 1870. To James Mill, the end of education was "to render the individual happy and make him an instrument of happiness to himself and to others." Education was not limited to schooling but was "everything ...which operates from the first germ of existence to the final extinction of life."

James Mill laid the greatest stress on domestic and social sources of one's education. He considered political education came principally from man's analysis of the "political machine," the State, as a functioning day-to-day reality. If rewards were given by the State not to talent or virtue but to subservience to the will and command over the affections of the few, then "interest with the man above (would be) the only sure means to the next step in wealth, power, or consideration." The result was that the "whole tribe of faculties denoted by the words intrigue, flattery, backbiting, treachery, etc. are the fruitful offspring of that political education which the government, where the interests of the subject many are but a secondary object, cannot fail to produce," While speaking in the context of an oligarchical society like that of England, Mill's view does not lose its force in a wider democratic context; whatever is taught formally in

the schools, the objective reality of the political system would itself be the determinative educator of the political morals of the people.⁴⁶

John Stuart Mill was to draw upon the teachings of his father, Smith, Jean Baptiste Say, Godwin, and Humboldt in preparing his own views on the proper scope of the State's role in education. Like these thinkers he held that man, to achieve his proper end, to achieve the "highest and most harmonious development of his powers to a complete and consistent whole, as dictated by reason, must have as his object the individuality of power and development," that is, unrestricted sovereignty over his education. To accomplish this he needed "freedom and a variety of situations" from which arose that "individual vigor and manifold diversity" that combine to produce "originality." To Mill, it was essential for society that originality be encouraged "precisely because the tyranny of (mass) opinion is such as to make eccentricity a reproach." Yet "the amount of eccentricity in a society has generally been proportional to the amount of genius, vigor and moral courage it contained. That so few dare to be eccentric marks the chief danger of this time."

Mill also believed that different persons required

different conditions for their spiritual development, and could "no more exist healthily in the same moral, than all the variety of plants can in the same physical atmosphere and climate." He concluded that:

Such are the differences among human beings in the sources of pleasure and their susceptibilities to pain, and the operation on them of different physical and moral agencies, that unless there is a diversity in their modes of life, they neither obtain their fair share of happiness, nor grow up to the mental, moral, and aesthetic stature of which their nature is capable.⁴⁸

Since eccentricity and originality are central to Mill's political theory, it is not surprising that he objected to State control of education:

A general state education is a mere contrivance for moulding people to be exactly like one another; and as the mould in which it casts them is that which pleases the predominant power in the government, whether this be a monarch, a priesthood, an aristocracy, or the majority of the existing generation, in proportion as it is efficient and successful, it establishes a

⁴⁶James and John Stuart Mill, On Education, by F. A. Cavanagh, ed. (New York 1931) pp. 72-73.

⁴⁷John Stuart Mill, On Liberty, by Mary Warnock, ed. (Cleveland 1962), pp. 196-97.

⁴⁸Ibid., pp. 197-198.

despotism over the mind, leading by natural tendency to one over the body.⁴⁹

Yet Mill's essentially utilitarian approach to moral and other kinds of philosophic questions made him unwilling to exclude the State absolutely from the realm of education. He asserted the right of the child to an education in order that he could function in the economy and enhance his mental faculties. To deny a child such opportunity was a "moral crime" to both the child and society. If the parent could not afford some minimum level of instruction, the State was obligated to pay for it in whole or part. Mill argued for a distinction between the State's obligation to compel a reasonable amount of education and conducting that education itself through State schools. "That the whole or any large part of the education of the people should be in the State's hands I go as far as anyone in deprecating."⁵⁰

Mill also realized that to allow the State to require some minimum standard of education for all children opened the door to government intervention in the curriculum. Yet he was willing to allow the State to set standards. He proposed a compulsory examination system certifying that the child had mastered the skill of reading, and gradually extending its testing to other subjects as well. To prevent "improper" influence by the State through the examining process,

⁴⁹Ibid., p. 239.

⁵⁰Ibid., pp. 238-239.

Mill recommended that only "facts and positive science" be tested. He even advocated the State conduct examinations for entry into the professions, provided they were open to anyone regardless of his background or previous education. But his examinations would not prevent anyone from practicing a specific trade or profession; they merely notified the public that a person had in fact passed, or failed to pass, such a standard test.

Yet Mill's ideas about examinations and standards were to prove less powerful than the fears he expressed about parental inadequacy. Liberal sentiment about the plight of the poor or the neglected child was to prove to be the opening wedge of the interventionist State.⁵¹

Historian John Hurt has documented with great skill the ways in which even the most seemingly innocuous State subsidization and supervision can over a brief period of time create its own reasons and a dynamic for further intervention and control.⁵²

In 1833 the English government began its first systematic program of State subsidy for building the schools of its two principal church school societies. While occasional royal grants had been made for educational endowment in earlier years, this time the grants were to open the way to control the use of these funds. In 1839 the government decided that it

⁵¹Ibid., p. 241.

⁵²John Hurt, Education in Evolution: Church, State, Society, and Popular Education 1800-1870 (London 1971).

would make no further grants unless government inspectors supervised the construction of the buildings to ensure that the school conformed with its regulations.

The inspectors were to afford assistance, not to control, and they were to hold office at the pleasure of the Archbishops of York and Canterbury. At the same time, the government first established a department of education under the supervision of the Privy Council Committee on Education.⁵³

At first, the department appointed only two inspectors; but within a decade the number increased tenfold; by 1861 sixty-one inspectors or assistant inspectors were making visitations and reporting their observations. In 1846 and 1847 the department issued a series of administrative code revisions that inaugurated day-by-day supervision over the schools.

The health and training of teachers, the contents of the curriculum, attendance records, payment of grants on the basis of student success in State examinations, generous awards for successful scholars and for teachers certified by State qualifying examinations, all these plus the ever-pending visits of the inspectors greatly expanded the State's control of the church schools.

In 1861 through a revised code and a change in the examinations, the department of education was able to shift the focus of the curriculum from predominately religious to secular subjects. In 1860, twenty years after its establishment, the department of

education absorbed nearly one-fifth of the national budget, twice the amount spent on the colonial and consular services.⁵⁴ Though the operation of the system was not as effective as intended, the introduction of universal State schooling in 1870 was made possible by the gradual extension of governmental control through the kinds of concessions that Mill himself had made possible. Within four decades administrative dynamism had engulfed the formerly private church schools into a mixed private-public system in which the State would play an increasingly powerful role through its subsidization, examinations, and rights of inspection.

But if the establishment of a State-controlled system of schooling in England came late and on cat's feet, in Ireland one can trace back to the sixteenth century attempts to create a State control over education, and, through schooling, a control over the culture and politics of the people.⁵⁵ An important part of the process was the suppression of all forms of schooling for or by Catholics. Meanwhile, royal subsidies and endowments were provided from time to time to establish schools for Anglicans, or for the proselytizing Catholics. The long and unhappy experience of the Irish Catholics with these private Protestantizing schools in Ireland from the seventeenth through

⁵⁴Ibid., see table on regulations of 1849-1847, p. 42.

⁵⁵Donald Akenson, The Irish Education Experiment (London 1970), see Chapters 1 through 3.

⁵³Ibid., pp. 32-38.

the early nineteenth century goes far to explain their suspicion and resistance to public schooling in the United States from the 1830s.

The response of the Irish Catholics in America to the establishment of the nonsectarian but culturally Protestant public school system in the United States was to create a parallel privately financed parochial school system, the largest body of nonpublic schools still extant. This effort was undoubtedly possible largely because it was the logical continuation of the establishment of a system or network of private Catholic schools in Ireland during the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, the famous "hedge schools." Created by the Catholic peasantry in defiance of the penal laws, the hedge schools represented a vast popular conspiracy by parents, students, and teachers to thwart the government's designs to reduce them to economic helplessness, permanent social inferiority, religious ignorance, and cultural deprivation.

The philosophic debate over the correct role of the State in the schooling of citizens has progressed through the past two centuries along three lines:

- some have supported State schooling as an instrument of social, political, and cultural control;
- some, suspicious of State power, sought to limit its intervention to schooling the indigent and providing standards of learning through testing;

• finally, some saw the need to totally separate schooling from the State to remove education from its control.

The twentieth century has seen dramatic documentation of the State's use of the schools for political control. Even the excesses of Fascist and Communist use of education cannot mask the similarity of methods, and in a broad sense, of goals, in other less notorious national systems. The conception of the role of the school in American society held by John Dewey,⁵⁶ or Robert Hutchins and Freeman Butts is not different in kind from that of Napoleon, Hitler, or the various socialist vanguardists. All want to use the school to inculcate their particular vision of the ideal society, to impose their version of "civism," as Butts calls it. All seek monopoly over the minds and hearts of the people through monopoly over the means of education.

If this monopoly has not yet succeeded in the United States (possibly through a combined lack of bureaucratic centralization, incompetent performance, and the constitutional guarantee of private schooling through the Supreme Court decision in Pierce v. Society of Sisters), it does not mean that its future success is impossible. Difficulties

⁵⁶See the article by Clarence Karier, "Liberalism and the Quest for Orderly Change" in Michael Katz, ed., Education in American History: Readings on the Social Issues (New York) 1973), pp. 303-17.

mount in the private sector of education in the United States due to inflation, and more importantly, the increasing percentage of income absorbed by the State through taxation. Add to this the powerful control exercised over private schools through State licensing and accreditation, and one can perceive the effective disappearance of such private schooling within several decades.

The social and economic dynamics of the public school system often appears to operate under a Gresham's law--the public or free driving out the private and paid--except for the children of the rich who can, through both their wealth and residential segregation, escape the worst features of the public schools.

Among the classical liberals, utilitarianism eroded whatever limitations they placed on the role of the State in education. For all their commitment to market solutions to the problems of providing schooling, Adam Smith, Say, Humboldt, Mill, and their associates left the door open for State intervention; it was only necessary for changing circumstances plus fear of social disorders among the "unenlightened masses" to provide new "necessities" for new regulations, larger and more diverse subsidies, manipulation of the examinations, etc. Soon the private schools themselves were increasingly under State control.

The major shift in liberal capitalist views came in the twentieth century when rational planning of the economy was tied to rational planning of the educational

system--ushering in the progressive reform movement.⁵⁷

The classical liberal penchant for finding virtue in necessity continues today. At a special meeting to discuss "the relationship between Education and the State," Stephen K. Bailey, Vice President of the American Council on Education, saw the tensions between the academy and the State as having a "generic quality," a dilemma "we cannot rationally wish to resolve, because the State has more than the academy has of what it takes to draw the line." He continued:

The public interest would not...be served if the academy were to enjoy an untroubled immunity....Nor would it be served by the academy's being subjected to an intimate surveillance. Whatever our current discomforts because of a sense that the State is crowding us a bit, the underlying tension is benign. Like most paradoxes, this one is a great humbler. It chastens intellectual arrogance. It induces bargains and compromises and makes politicians and brokers us all. And it reminds us of the ultimate paradox of freedom: the absolute belief that only

⁵⁷Ibid., see article by David K. Cohen and Marvin Lazerson, "Education and the Corporate Order," pp. 318-32.

tentative beliefs may be safely permitted.⁵⁸

Bailey concluded that though the State is the adversary of the academy, and vice versa, "viewed from a more elevated perspective, the academy is for the State a benign antibody, and the State is the academy's legitimator, benefactor, and protector....May they remain in tension."

Bailey rejected the metaphor, used by Ivan Illich, that the academy, or education, is a coordinate power like the medieval Church, in relation to the State.⁵⁹ Yet this analytic viewpoint is increasingly valid. Few quarrel with the view that the separation of Church and State has been one of the most significant societal changes in modern history. It has been good for individuals and for the churches themselves.

Is it not the time for critics of the public school to consider whether the future of our liberty requires absolute separation of the school from the State?

Perhaps the words of eighteenth century's William Godwin summarize the case best:

The project of a national education ought uniformly to be discouraged, on account of its obvious alliance with national

government. This is an alliance of a more formidable nature, than the old and much contested alliance of church and State. Before we put so powerful a machine under the direction of so ambiguous an agent, it behooves us to consider well what it is that we do. Government will not fail to employ it to strengthen its hands, and perpetuate its institutions....It is not true that our youth ought to be instructed to venerate the constitution, however excellent; they should be led to venerate the truth; and the constitution only so far as it corresponds with their uninfluenced deductions of truth.

Had the scheme of a national education been adopted when despotism was most triumphant,...it would have been the most formidable and profound contrivance for that purpose that imagination can suggest. Still, in the countries where liberty chiefly prevails, it is reasonably to be assumed that there are important errors and a national system of education has the most direct tendency to perpetuate those errors, and to form all minds upon one model.⁶⁰

⁵⁸Stephen K. Bailey, "Education and the State," in John Hughes, ed., Education and the State (Washington 1975), pp. 1-14.

⁵⁹Ivan Illich, Deschooling Society (New York 1972), p. 15.

⁶⁰Godwin, op. cit., p. 238.

As Joel Spring recently remarked about Godwin's critique, it was born out by facts of subsequent history.⁶¹

⁶¹Joel Spring, A Primer of Libertarian Education (New York 1975). p. 19.